

MESECVI Warns of Social Exclusion, Stigma, and Impunity Surrounding Sexual Violence against Awajún and Wampis Girls and Adolescents

Lima, September 11, 2026. A delegation of the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) of the Organization of American States (OAS) concluded its technical assistance visit to Peru, held from September 4 to 11, to learn about the situation of Awajún and Wampis girls and adolescents who are victims of sexual violence in the province of Condorcanqui and to examine the responses designed to ensure prevention, protection, care, access to justice, and reparation.

The visit was carried out at the invitation of the Judiciary of Peru. The Committee expresses its special appreciation for this invitation and for the openness, cooperation, and active participation of the bodies and institutions involved at the different levels of government and within the community. In particular, it recognizes the willingness of authorities from the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches; the Public Prosecutor's Office; the Peruvian National Police; the Ministries of Women and Vulnerable Populations, Education, Health, Interior, and Culture; provincial and district authorities; Indigenous authorities; and women's and civil society organizations that contributed to the mission. It also extends special thanks to German Development Cooperation, implemented by GIZ, and to International Justice Mission (IJM) for the cooperation and support that made this visit possible.

Based on the information gathered and observations made in the field, the Committee identifies sexual violence against girls and adolescents as a structural and persistent problem that is not confined to educational settings but also extends to family and community environments. Existing responses still fail to ensure effectively that girls are recognized, heard, and protected as rights-holders. Gaps in protection, social tolerance of violence, and institutional fragmentation hinder timely action consistent with their best interests, their progressive autonomy, and right to live free from violence.

The delegation began the visit with a high-level meeting at the headquarters of the Judiciary, where it was received by the President of the Judiciary, Janet Tello Gilardi, together with Supreme Court Justice Elvia Barrios Alvarado and the Minister of Women and Vulnerable Populations, María Seminario. Miguel Ángel Trinidad, OAS Representative in Peru, and Mr. Dennis Raffael, Consul of Germany in Peru, also participated. The meeting brought together authorities from the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches, Indigenous women's and civil society organizations, and representatives of the international cooperation community.

The delegation subsequently traveled to the districts of Santa María de Nieva, Río Santiago and El Cenepa. In Condorcanqui, it carried out a working agenda with State and community authorities; Awajún and Wampis Indigenous authorities and women leaders; representatives of victims; justice officials; and personnel from the ministries responsible for women, education, health, and protection. It also visited student residences, a health center, and services involved in the care and protection of victims and the investigation of cases. The visit included an assessment of the rollout and implementation of the National Specialized Justice System for the Protection and Punishment of Violence against Women and Members of the Family Group (SNEJ).

The Committee extends special thanks to the mothers, women leaders, representatives of victims, and Indigenous women's organizations that shared their experiences and knowledge. Their voices were essential to understanding the manifestations of violence, the barriers faced by girls and their families, and the responses that may be effective in the territory. It also wishes to thank the officials who provide services in the area, many of whom demonstrate a deep commitment despite existing shortcomings, even drawing on their own resources.

The delegation was composed of the Vice-Chairs of the Committee of Experts, Mónica Maureira of Chile and Yildalina Tatem Brache of the Dominican Republic; the Expert from Panama, Jennifer Delgado Urueta; the Technical Secretary of MESECVI, Luz Patricia Mejía Guerrero; and specialists Eva Villarreal Pascual, Tatiana Bensa, and Julieth Palomo. The mission was accompanied by Peru's Expert to the Committee, Ana María Mendieta, and by a delegation from the Judiciary led by Supreme Court Justice Elvia Barrios, who also serves as Chair of the Judiciary's Commission on Gender Justice. The technical visit was also accompanied by delegations from GIZ and International Justice Mission.

The Belém do Pará Convention and Applicable Standards

As a State Party to the Belém do Pará Convention, Peru has undertaken to guarantee the full exercise of the human rights of women and girls, particularly their right to live free from violence and discrimination. This guarantee requires girls to be recognized, heard, and protected as rights-holders. The Convention links this right to the elimination of stereotypes and social and cultural practices based on concepts of inferiority or subordination (Article 6(b)). Accordingly, the State must act with due diligence to prevent, address, investigate, punish, and ensure reparation for violence (Article 7), while also addressing the conditions that enable, reproduce, and silence it. This entails modifying sociocultural patterns and institutional practices that legitimize the subordination of women and girls, as well as strengthening the capacities and services needed to ensure an effective response (Article 8).

Article 9 of the Convention requires consideration of the specific conditions of vulnerability faced by Indigenous girls and adolescents. Within this framework, the issues identified demand an enhanced, territorial, preventive, intersectional and intercultural response.

Structural Violence Affecting the Territory and Communities

The situation in Condorcanqui cannot be reduced to the cases reported in educational settings. The information received reveals a continuum of sexual, physical, and psychological violence across schools, families, and communities, within a context of profoundly unequal power relations. Reports documented over more than a decade also demonstrate that this is not a recent problem, but rather a context of tolerance of violence against women and girls that has persisted over time and has been aggravated by poverty, social exclusion, and State neglect.

The Committee notes with concern the persistence of conditions that foster the normalization, tolerance, and silencing of violence, particularly when girls live with their aggressors, are separated from their families, or face stigma and family or community pressure not to report the violence. These patterns perpetuate intergenerational cycles of violence and associated harmful practices, such as child pregnancy and early or forced unions.

The delegation also received testimonies concerning threats and reprisals against victims, family members, women leaders, and those who support the reporting of violence, as well as information regarding possible conflicts of interest, omissions, cover-ups, and other irregularities. These allegations must be investigated promptly, independently, and impartially. Their

persistence discourages reporting and undermines confidence in both community and ordinary justice systems.

The mission found insufficient coordination between State jurisdiction and community justice, as well as between these systems and the protection, health, and education sectors. The absence of clear, transparent, and culturally appropriate coordination mechanisms results in contradictory responses, protection gaps, and persistent impunity. It is therefore essential to establish, through ongoing intercultural dialogue, mechanisms and protocols that safeguard at all times the rights, best interests, and progressive autonomy of girls and adolescents, and that guarantee women victims of violence appropriate mechanisms for protection, information, care, and access to justice.

Territorial isolation exacerbates these violations. Long distances, reliance on river transportation, high costs, and limited connectivity restrict the regular presence of institutions and make access to justice, health care, education, and protection more costly. The Public Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Ministry of Culture, and the Peruvian National Police lack regular and sufficient river transportation to reach communities. Their interventions therefore depend on complex logistics that, in many cases, are inadequate or simply nonexistent. When transportation, food, and lodging costs fall on victims, their families, or the Indigenous organizations accompanying them, distance ceases to be merely a geographic difficulty and becomes an effective barrier to the exercise of rights.

The mission also learned of communities' concern regarding the expansion of illegal mining and other illicit economies. Damage to rivers compromises traditional livelihoods and food security, increases economic dependence, and creates new dynamics of exploitation and violence. The differentiated impact on women, girls, and adolescents is evident, as these activities increase the risks of recruitment, trafficking, and sexual exploitation and negatively alter family and community relations.

A Fragmented Response that Limits Effective Access to Rights

Despite reports and warnings over many years, the State response has been insufficiently preventive and, in important respects, delayed, fragmented, or, in some cases, nonexistent. The Committee recognizes the work undertaken by the Judiciary to implement the SNEJ in Condorcanqui, establish specialized bodies, bring justice closer to communities, and ensure the personnel required for its operation, despite the difficult working conditions in the area. Nevertheless, the mission observed significant disparities among the institutions that make up the System. The Public Prosecutor's Office and the Peruvian National Police have implemented it only partially and continue to have insufficient capacity in the territory, limiting reporting, investigation, protection, evidence gathering, and the prosecution of the vast majority of cases. For many victims, filing a report, undergoing a medical examination or specialized interview, or participating in judicial proceedings may require lengthy river travel and expenses for transportation, food, and lodging.

The delegation likewise found that some procedural safeguards and protection measures provided for under the ordinary justice system lack the material and institutional conditions required for their effective application and, in practice, become additional barriers to the exercise of the right of access to justice. This occurs, among other circumstances, because of the absence or insufficiency of Gesell interview rooms, forensic personnel, electricity to operate such facilities, and suitable spaces within the Public Prosecutor's Office for taking testimony from children and adolescents without revictimization, even though the Judiciary's Gesell rooms are available; difficulties in serving notifications promptly; insufficient means and capacity to

implement, monitor, and enforce protection measures, particularly in the most remote communities; and the absence of temporary shelters in the area. This last shortcoming requires women and girls in need of protection to be transferred away from their communities and territories, separating them from their families, support networks, culture, and community environment. State protection may thus entail a new form of uprooting and an additional burden for victims themselves, potentially discouraging them from reporting violence or continuing to participate in judicial proceedings.

The information received also indicates a high number of administrative proceedings that have been time-barred, shelved, or closed due to deficiencies in case processing and referral, limited territorial coverage, difficulties in obtaining timely access to forensic services and specialized interviews, a shortage of female interpreters and female forensic medical examiners, insufficient mental health services, and budgetary and logistical constraints.

The information received also indicates a high number of administrative proceedings that have become time-barred, been archived, or been closed due to shortcomings in the processing and referral of cases; limited territorial presence; difficulties obtaining timely access to forensic services and specialized interviews; too few women interpreters and forensic physicians; insufficient mental health services; and budgetary and logistical constraints. A victim may be required to approach, one after another, community authorities, the school, health services, the Police, Women's Emergency Centers, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and the Judiciary; travel repeatedly; and recount the events again and again, regardless of the high transportation costs or the risks entailed in reporting. The system must be organized around the victim, not the other way around.

Effective access to justice requires accredited Awajún and Wampis interpreters, preferably women, with specialized training. The interpreters available to the Judiciary are insufficient, and all institutions must have access to such services. Interpretation cannot be limited to translating words: it must enable victims to understand the proceedings, describe their experiences, and participate effectively in decisions that affect them, recognizing that nonessential formalities must not obstruct justice. There is a particularly acute shortage of Wampis interpreters, who are virtually nonexistent in the area.

Education, Protection, and Educational Continuity

Educational settings are central to preventing and detecting violence at an early stage, but they are also among the places in which sexual assaults against girls and adolescents have been reported. Student residences are essential to guarantee access to education for those who live in remote communities; at the same time, they place students far from their families and in relationships of authority, trust, and dependence that require heightened duties of care, supervision, and protection.

Educational institutions must have safe, confidential, and expeditious protocols and mechanisms for guidance, reporting, and response. Measures adopted in relation to persons named in complaints must effectively prevent contact, pressure, or reprisals, with respect for due process, and without requiring victims to leave school or move away from their communities. Prevention requires comprehensive sexuality education that is age-appropriate and culturally relevant and that strengthens knowledge of rights, bodily autonomy, the identification of abusive conduct, and the ability to seek help. For adolescents, it must also address consent and equal relationships.

Health, HIV, and Mental Health

The mission identified significant gaps in access to continuous and culturally appropriate health and mental health services. Comprehensive care must include emergency contraception, post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, timely diagnosis, continuity of treatment, and case follow-up.

The information received concerning the serious HIV situation in the territory and cases affecting girls is cause for alarm. Coordinated mechanisms must be established among health services, child protection, and justice institutions to assess each case in strict confidence, without stigma, and with consideration of the different possible modes of transmission. Whenever there are indications of possible sexual violence, the corresponding protection and investigative measures must be activated immediately.

The information provided concerning suicides among adolescents and their possible relationship to experiences of violence, abuse, pregnancy among girls, isolation, stigma, and the breakdown of family ties is likewise a matter of concern. The Committee considers it a priority to strengthen prevention, early identification, and sustained, culturally appropriate psychological care by coordinating health services, families, schools, communities, and child protection systems.

A Territorial and Intercultural Response Built with Women

Awajún and Wampis women, including women leaders, play an essential role in protecting girls and adolescents. They accompany victims and their families, facilitate transportation and interpretation, follow up on cases, and help break the silence. Their participation must be effective in the design, implementation, and evaluation of responses, without transferring to them responsibilities that belong to the State and while guaranteeing protection measures against threats and reprisals.

The Committee encourages progress toward a territorial and intercultural SNEJ, with multidisciplinary teams, mobile forensic capacity, professional interpretation, funded transportation capable of reaching communities periodically, and secure mechanisms for reporting and remote participation. Experiences involving oral reports, video calls, voice notes, and decisions issued in the Awajún and Wampis languages demonstrate possibilities that should be institutionalized with guarantees of confidentiality, understanding, and due process.

A comprehensive response cannot end with investigation and punishment. The mission identified the absence of an adequate and sustained strategy for reparation, recovery, and healing in response to violence that affects health, education, life plans, family relations, and the social fabric of communities. Reparation must be individual, community-based, and transformative; it must be developed with women, girls, families, and communities and coordinated with specialized services.

Preliminary Recommendations

Based on its observations during the visit, and without prejudice to the analysis to be developed in its report, the Committee makes the following preliminary recommendations to the Peruvian State:

- Complete and harmonize the territorial rollout of the SNEJ across all participating institutions, particularly the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Peruvian National Police,

with stable personnel, an operational budget, transportation, fuel, infrastructure, and effective coordination mechanisms.

- Implement and strengthen multidisciplinary teams in justice, health, child protection, and forensic care, with the capacity to reach communities periodically, and decentralize permanent services to El Cenepa and Río Santiago.
- Guarantee immediate and comprehensive care for victims of sexual violence, including emergency kits, emergency contraception, prophylaxis for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, antiretroviral treatment when appropriate, psychological care, follow-up, and safe, culturally appropriate shelter alternatives that prevent uprooting and interruption of education.
- Strengthen mechanisms to prevent, detect, report, and investigate violence and to protect victims in schools, student residences, families, and communities; prevent contact, pressure, or reprisals by persons named in complaints; and ensure the continuity of education for victims, while respecting due process.
- Develop, together with women and community leaders, both women and men, a single care pathway and case-tracking system from reporting through protection, care, investigation, judgment, and reparation, coordinating justice institutions, the Police, health and education services, and child protection with Indigenous authorities and women's organizations.
- Guarantee the permanent availability, throughout the entire care pathway, of accredited Awajún and Wampis women interpreters with specialized training; establish in Condorcanqui the mechanisms needed to train and accredit interpreters directly in the territories, preferably women, with specialized knowledge of gender-based violence, childhood, and access to justice; and ensure accessible, secure, and confidential mechanisms for remote reporting and participation.
- Increase the presence of professionals in the area and also guarantee them emotional support so they can provide services to girls and adolescents under appropriate conditions.
- Review cases that are time-barred, closed, or stalled, and promptly, independently, and impartially investigate allegations of omissions, reprisals, cover-ups, conflicts of interest, or other irregularities, adopting effective protection measures for victims, family members, and women human rights defenders in both the community and ordinary justice systems.
- Strengthen the permanent presence of health, mental health, and child protection services; improve the response to HIV and suicide risk; and activate protection and investigation whenever there are indications of possible sexual violence, guaranteeing confidentiality and freedom from stigma.
- Establish a permanent mechanism for intercultural dialogue and coordination, with the effective participation of Indigenous authorities and, especially, Awajún and Wampis women, including women leaders, to prevent violence and ensure responses compatible with the human rights of girls and adolescents.
- Conduct coordinated investigations into illegal mining, trafficking, and sexual exploitation, and adopt measures for prevention, territorial protection, and sustainable development that address their impacts on women and girls, bodies of water, livelihoods, and food security.
- Establish comprehensive mechanisms for reparation, recovery, healing, and guarantees of non-repetition, both individual and community-based, developed with Awajún and Wampis women, girls, families, and communities.

In all these measures, the voices, progressive autonomy, best interests, and right of girls and adolescents to live free from violence must be at the center of State action.

The Committee will continue analyzing and corroborating the information gathered. MESECVI will subsequently prepare a report on the technical visit, in which it will develop its findings and make recommendations to the Peruvian State regarding prevention, protection, care, investigation, punishment, reparation, healing, and guarantees of non-repetition.

The Committee reiterates its appreciation to the Judiciary for its openness and attention; to the other provincial, district, and community authorities, Indigenous women leaders, women's organizations, and civil society for their active participation; and to the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations and the Ministry of Culture. It also expresses its willingness to continue supporting the development of a sustainable response that guarantees all Awajún and Wampis girls and adolescents their right to live free from violence.